



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2007

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OCTOBER 7-13 IS MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Dear Editor,

Most people will be affected in some way by mental illness during their lifetimes. According to the National Institute of Health, over 26 percent of Americans over age 18 will suffer from a mental disorder in a given year. Though mental illness is quite common in our society, it is widely misunderstood. Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 7-13, gives us an opportunity to better inform ourselves about mental illness.

Many myths about mental illness persist, such as people with mental illness have no hope or are likely to be violent. In truth, the risk of violence among the mentally ill is small, as they are more often victims of violence than perpetrators of it. Also, many people believe a mental illness diagnosis is hopeless. However, treatment today is highly effective and recovery is possible – even people with the most serious mental illnesses can lead active, productive lives. We are fortunate in Virginia to have dedicated and capable people in our state facilities and in communities working to provide hope and improve the quality of life for individuals with mental illness and their families.

Part of Mental Illness Awareness Week is the National Alliance on Mental Illness walk on October 13th in Richmond. Governor Kaine will help kick off the event at 10 a.m. For more information, please visit www.namivirginia.org.

I hope you'll seek to understand the facts about mental illness. Doing so can make a difference in your life or in the life of a loved one in need.

James Reinhard, M.D., Commissioner
VA Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services

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Available to citizens statewide, Virginia's public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of 40 community services boards (CSBs) and 16 state facilities. DMHMRSAS seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery, and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships, and all aspects of community life for these individuals with mental health, mental retardation or substance abuse disorders.

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